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Message Text

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15
ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY MADRID
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3376

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 7408

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PINT, SP
SUBJ: A SCENARIO FOR IMMINENT TRANSFER OF POWERS TO JUAN CARLOS

REF: MADRID 7375

SUMMARY: NATIONAL MOVEMENT FIGURE, CLOSE TO SOLIS, HAS TOLD EMBASSY THAT ALL MAJOR POLITICAL FORCES, INCLUDING MILITARY, HAVE REACHED CONSENEUS THAT FRANCO SHOULD STEP DOWN AND FRANCO HIMSELF MAY ANNOUNCE HIS DECISION AT CABINET MEETING OCT 24. END SUMMARY

1. ORTI BORDAS, A KEY NATIONAL MOVEMENT FIGURE, WHO IS MEMBER OF STEERING COMMITTEES OF NATIONAL COUNCIL AND "CORTES" TOLD EMBOFF OCT 23 THAT FRANCO'S RESIGNATION WAS IMMINENT. PRACTICALLY ENTIRE CABINET (INCLUDING SOLIS), KEY MILITARY COMMANDERS, COUNCIL OF NATIONAL MOVEMENT, AND IMMEDIATE FAMILY HAVE ALL REPORTEDLY REACHED CONCLUSION THAT THIS STEP WAS IN NATIONAL INTEREST. FRANCO HAS ALREADY INSTRUCTED THAT PREVIOUS AGENDA OF COUNCIL OF MINISTERS SCHEDULED FOR OCT 24 BE SCRATCHED TO MAKE WAY FOR "POLITICAL MATTERS". A LAW HAS BEEN DRAFTED WHICH WOULD AMEND 1967 ORGANIC LAW'S RETENTION OF FRANCO'S ABSOLUTE POWERS BY VIRTUE OF TWO LAWS ADOPTED IN 1938 AND 1939. FRANCO IS EXPECTED TO USE THESE ABSOLUTE POWERS AS THE VEHICLE FOR RESIGNATION AND CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE. (AS PRESENTLY WRITTEN FRANCO
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RETAINS THESE ABSOLUTE POWERS FOR LIFE, THEY LAPSE

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WITH HIS DEATH.) ACCORDING TO ORTI BORDAS, FRANCO MIGHT USE CABINET MEETING TO ARTICULATE HIS DECISION AND SET IN TRAIN PRINCE'S ASSUMPTION AS HEAD OF STATE.

2. THE SOURCE THEN SPECULATED ABOUT WHAT HE SAW AS THE TWO ALTERNATIVES FOR JUAN CARLOS' GOVERNMENT, (A) A GOVT OF NATIONAL UNITY WITH REPRESENTATIVES FROM ALL SECTORS WILLING TO COLLABORATE, E.G. OPUS DEI TECHNOCRATS, CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS, NATIONAL MOVEMENT, CARLOSTS AND MONARCHISTS, WITH A COMMON COMMITMENT TO GRADUAL POLITICAL CHANGE; (B) THE CONTINUATION OF GOVT LED BY ARIAS NAVARRO, PROBABLY WITH CHANGES IN SEVERAL MINISTERIES AND EQUALLY COMMITTED TO STEP-BY-STEP DOMOCRATIZATION. THE ARIAS CABINET WOULD HOLD OFFICE UNTIL SCHEDULED MARCH, 1976 DLECTIONS. THE UNDER-LYING ASSUMPTION WOULD BE AN EFFORT TO AVOID EXCITING THE RIGHT WING INTO ADOPTING HOSTILE POLICY WHICH WOULD POLARIZE POLITICAL SCENE. ORTI BORDAS CLAIMS--IN A VIEW THAT IS WIDELY HELD--THAT THE VAST MAJORITY OF SPANIARDS WOULD WELCOME AN ORDERLY TRANSITION WITH PROMISE OF MODERATE ADJUSTMENTS IN THE POLITICAL SPHERE WHICH WOULD NOT THREATEN PRESENT DAY-TO-DAY PATTERNS OF LIFE.

3. AGAIN, AS WITH THE CONVERSATION WITH KEY MILITARY OFFICERS REPORTED SEPTEL, THE MISSING LINK IN THESE ELABORATE PLANS HAS TO DO WITH HOW FRANCO IS TO BE CONVINCED HE SHOULD STEP DOWN, AND HOW FRANCO WOULD BE EXPECTED TO WHILE AWAY THESE QUIET HOURS OF RETIREMENT THAT SO MANY ARE PLANNING FOR HIM. THE LOGIC OF THE NATION SUGGESTS RETIREMENT, THE LOGIC OF THE MAN SUGGESTS HE WILL RESIST FADING AWAY INTO THE WALLS OF THE PARDO. IF HEART TROUBLE STRIKES AGAIN SUDDENLY, THE COMPLEX PROCESS OF REMOVAL FOR INCAPACITATION MIGHT BECOME FEASIBLE.
STABLER

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